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## Into the River

University of Dayton. River Stewards

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Created By the River Stewards







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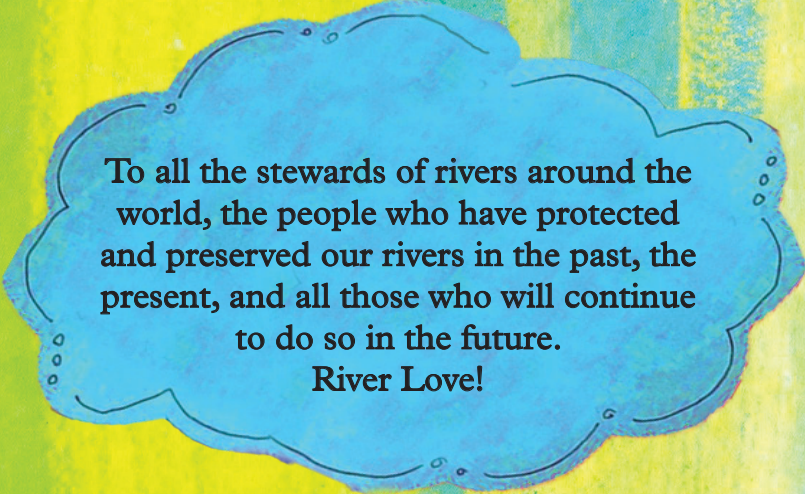


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Dayton, Ohio









To all the stewards of rivers around the  
world, the people who have protected  
and preserved our rivers in the past, the  
present, and all those who will continue  
to do so in the future.

River Love!





“Okay class, today we are going to learn about our local watershed.  
Can anyone tell me something about our river?”



Your teacher asks you, “What does the river look like to you?” You squirm in your seat as you try to imagine. You’ve never been to the river before. “It’s okay if you’ve never seen it. We are going to a RiverScape MetroPark tomorrow.”



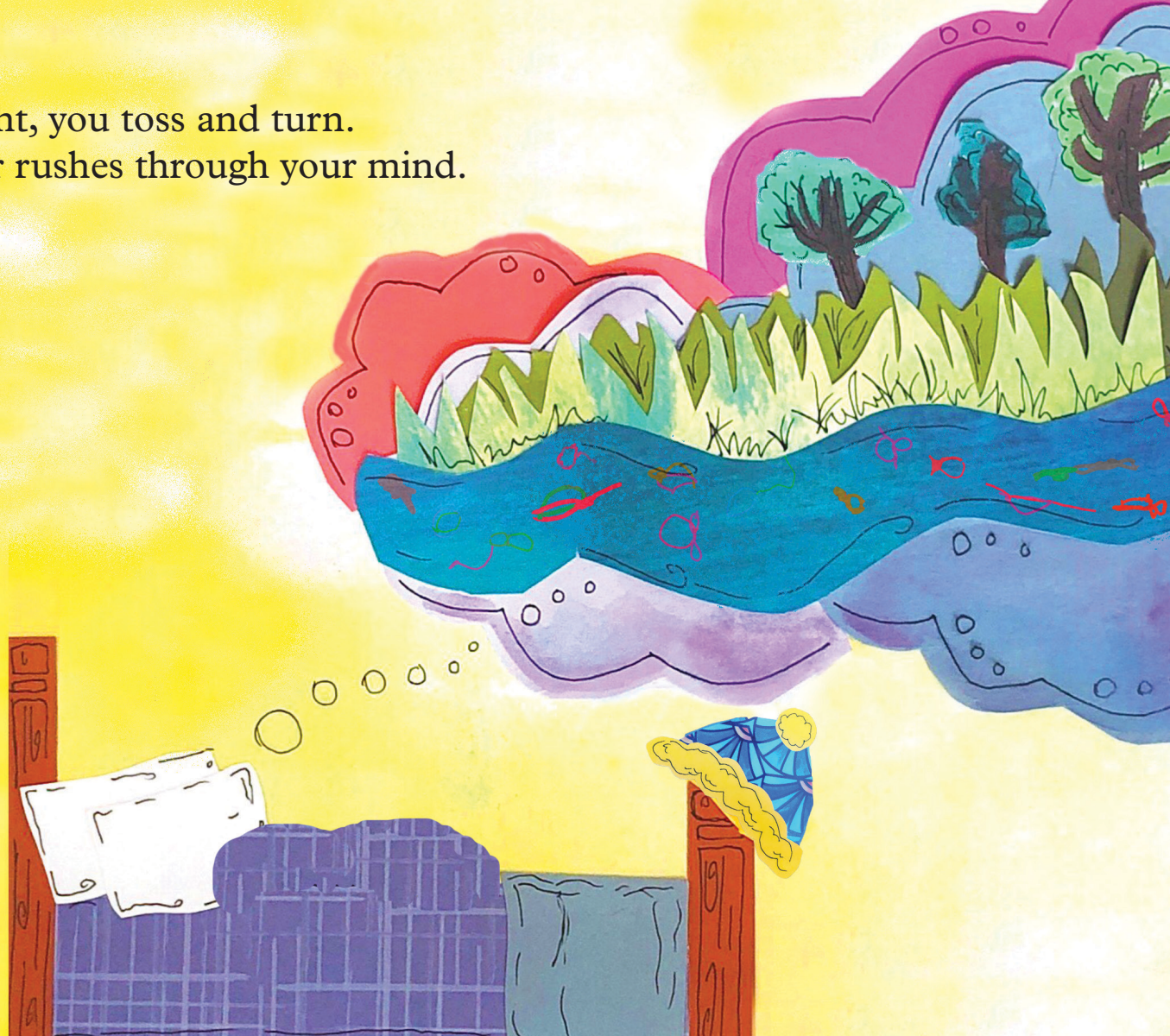


After school, your mom asks how you're feeling about the field trip.  
"I don't really know what to expect," you say.





In bed that night, you toss and turn.  
The Mad River rushes through your mind.





Suddenly, you find yourself flying through the gold and pink evening sky.

“Where am I?!” you exclaim.

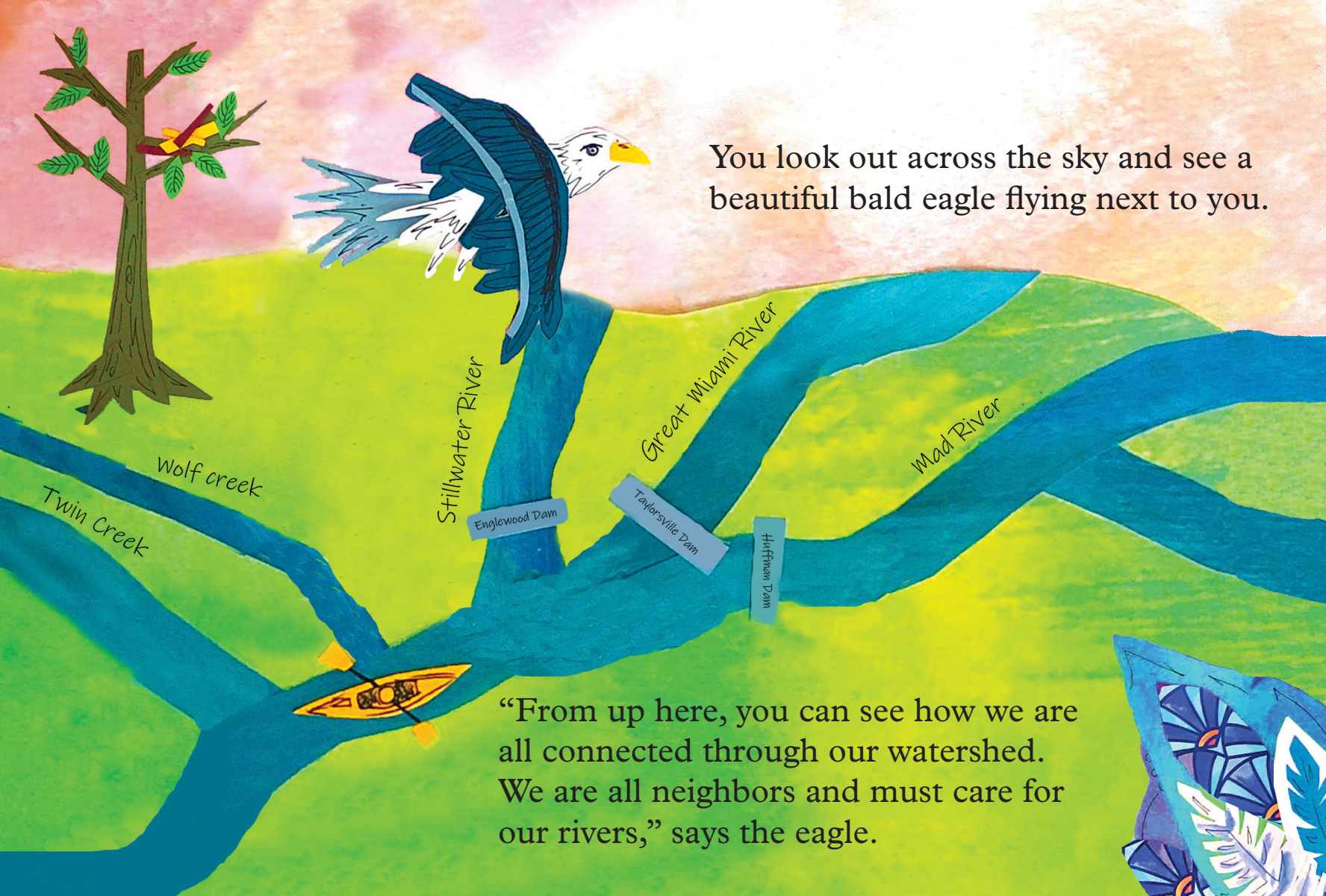




You look to your left and find grey-blue feathers where your arm used to be.  
You check your right arm and find more feathers. You turned into a great  
blue heron!



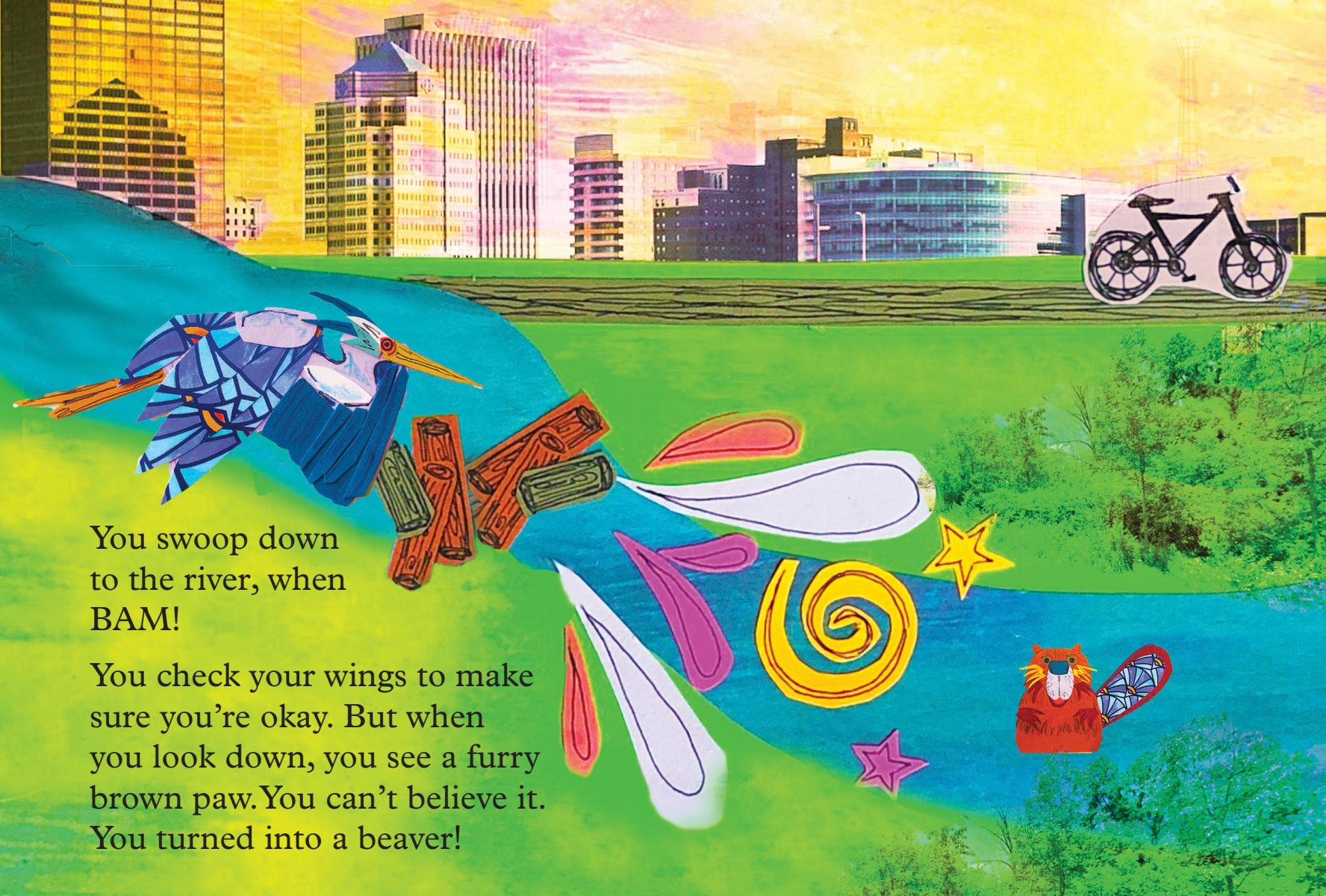




You look out across the sky and see a beautiful bald eagle flying next to you.

“From up here, you can see how we are all connected through our watershed. We are all neighbors and must care for our rivers,” says the eagle.



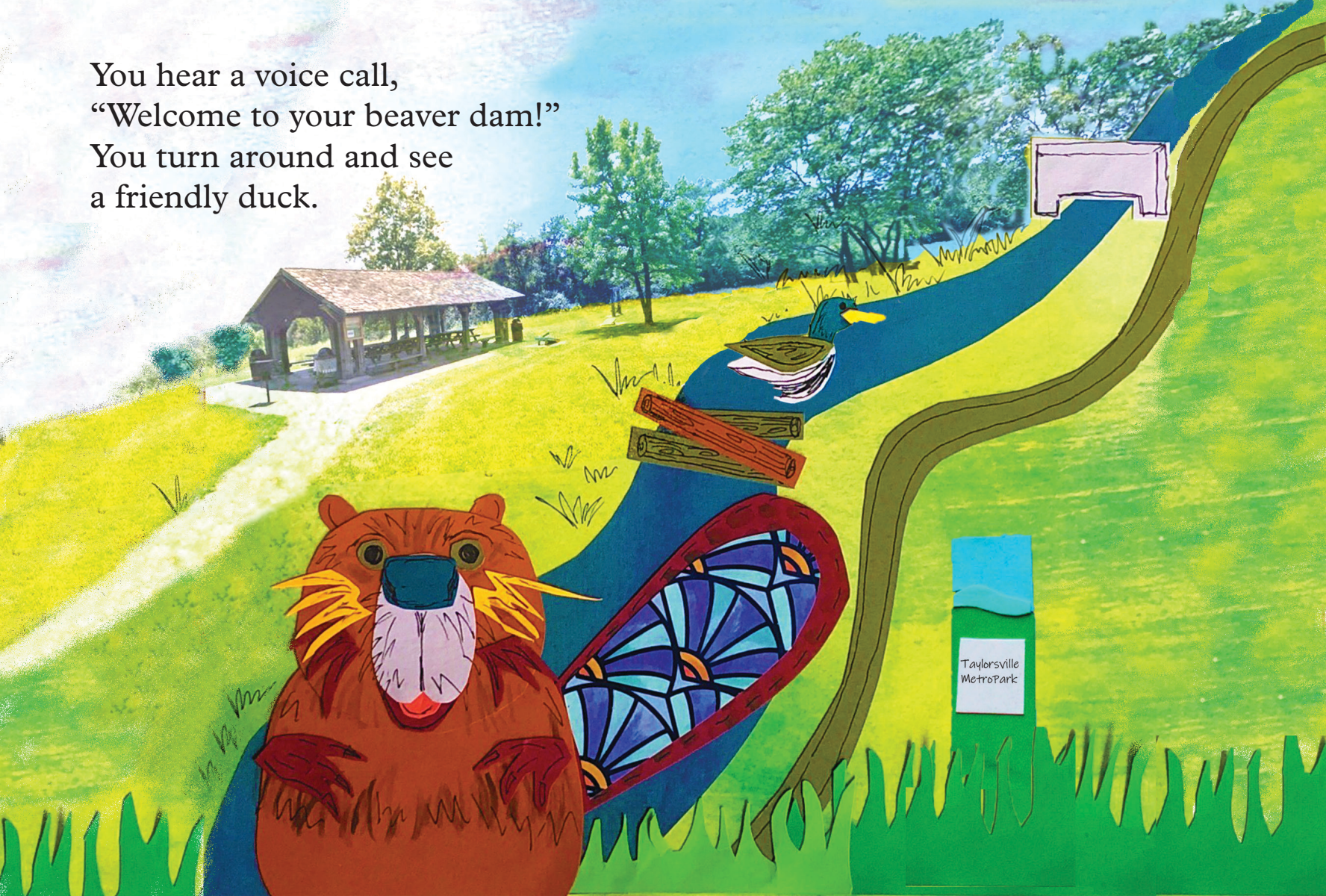


You swoop down  
to the river, when  
BAM!

You check your wings to make  
sure you're okay. But when  
you look down, you see a furry  
brown paw. You can't believe it.  
You turned into a beaver!



You hear a voice call,  
“Welcome to your beaver dam!”  
You turn around and see  
a friendly duck.





“The dam you live in is like the large ones humans make.  
Human dams protect their homes from flooding.



Our region’s human dams are special  
because they let fish and other creatures  
swim through them.”

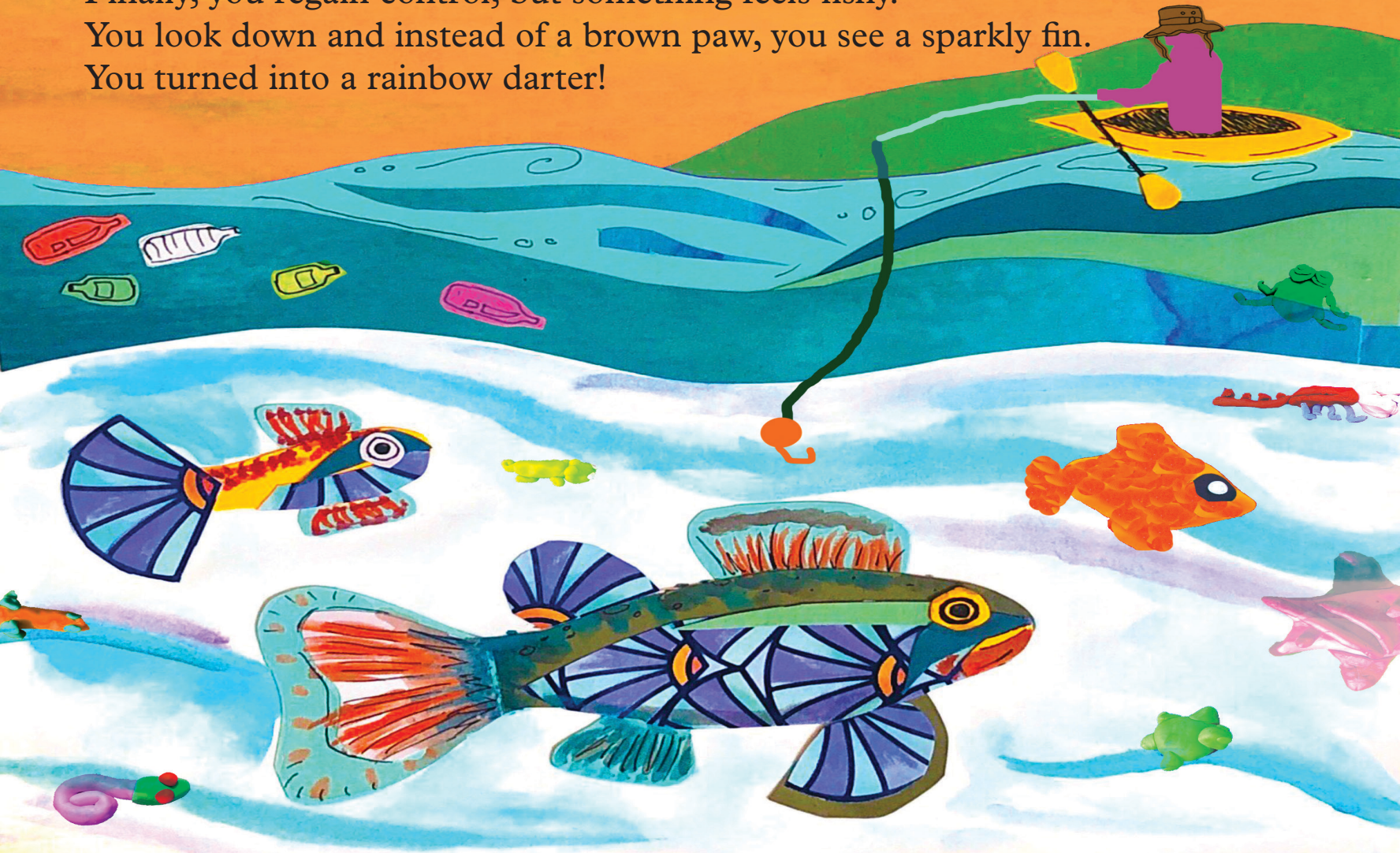


You say goodbye to the duck, when KER-SPLAT!  
A fishtail smacks you in the face, and you go tumbling down the river!





Finally, you regain control, but something feels fishy.  
You look down and instead of a brown paw, you see a sparkly fin.  
You turned into a rainbow darter!





You hear a yelp in the distance, “Help me! Help me!” Turning around, you see a fellow rainbow darter unable to move, trapped in the swirling trash.

You rush to rescue your fish friend from the pollution.  
“Thank you so much!” exclaims your new friend.





You notice a turtle resting on a rock as you swim toward the surface of the river. Intrigued, you swim toward the turtle.

“That is a very brave thing you did back there. All animals, including humans, have needed water since life began,” says the turtle.





“The first known people in this watershed settled here over 10,000 years ago. If we want to have a healthy river for your fish friend and all other creatures, we need to take action.”





“We need to work together  
with our neighbors.

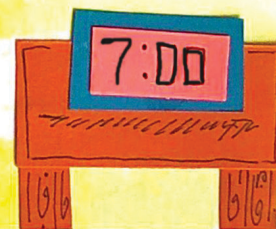
Remember, you’re never  
too small to make a  
difference.”





GASP! You throw off your sheets and bounce out of bed.

“I can’t wait to tell my friends about that crazy dream,” you think.





You run down the block to the bus stop.  
You don't want to be late for the field trip!





On the bus, you tell your friends all about your fantastic dream. You ask your teacher, “What can we do to help our river?” Your teacher tells you, “There are many ways to help our river. The best way to start is to learn more about it.”

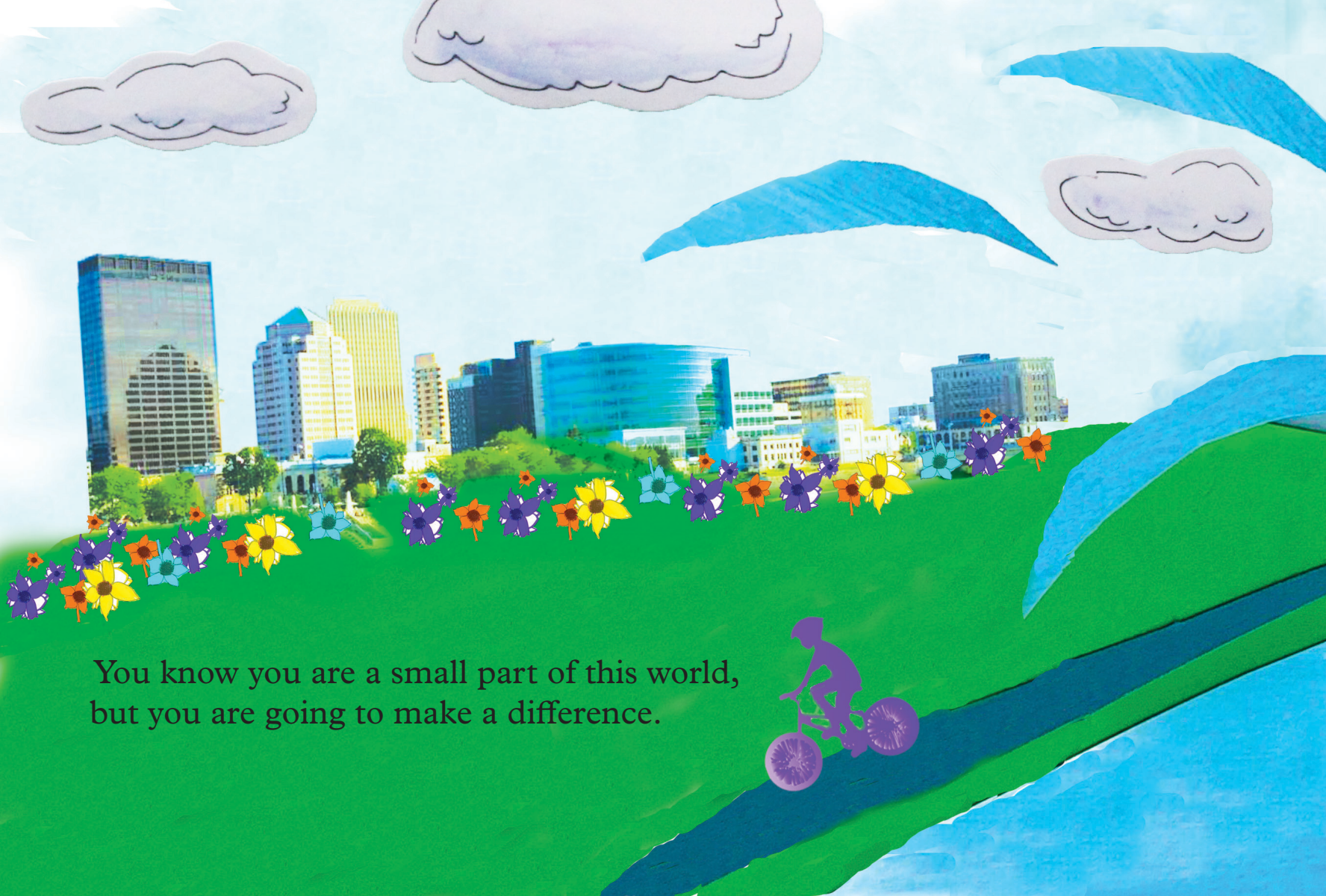




The river looks even better than you imagined.  
This is your river to love and protect.







You know you are a small part of this world,  
but you are going to make a difference.





Welcome to  
**DAYTON!**





### Great Blue Heron

Hi, I'm the Great Blue Heron! You may have seen me wading near a riverbed or perched in a tree above the water. I can grow up to 4 feet tall, and I have long legs and a long neck with grey blue feathers all over. I have black feathers over my eyes and coming off my head. You may see me wading around to eat, looking for fish or other water creatures to come my way. Sometimes I feed in shallower water or crop fields too! I like to live with my friends, we all build our nests near each other high up in the trees, just like a neighborhood, we call them "heronries."



### Eagle

Hello there, I'm an eagle! I am one of the most commonly recognized species, and I'm a bird of prey! I eat small birds and animals, and I love to live by rivers, marshes and swamps where there are lots of fish to eat. I have a white head and a dark brown body once I've become an adult. I also have a large wingspan and can live to be 50 years old. Sadly, eagles are endangered, meaning there are not a lot of my friends anymore.



### Beaver

Hi, I'm a beaver living in the Great Miami Watershed! I am known as North America's largest rodent, and I love life in the water. I have webbed feet, helping me to be a great swimmer. In Ohio, we can be found in ponds, lakes, and rivers. We also create dams to slow down the river and create an area where I can build a burrow for myself and my family. Burrows help protect me from predators, or animals that eat them. One of my best features are my teeth, which I need to survive- they never stop growing!







### Duck

Hello, you may recognize me from your local ponds and streams, I'm a Mallard duck. The male ducks are green and blue feathers while the female ducks are brown. My favorite things to eat are worms, dragonflies, beetles, and plant roots. But I'm not too picky! You can find Mallards all over the world, not just in Ohio! I have cousins that live in Australia, Brazil, Argentina, and South Africa. No matter where we live though we work hard to make nests for our young so that we can protect them against predators. and are not even close to being endangered!



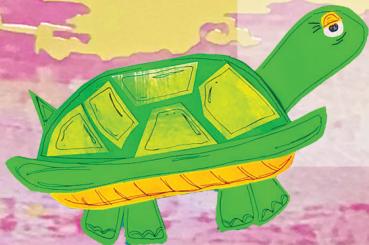
### Rainbow Darter Fish

Hi! I'm the rainbow darter. I've been named as "one of Ohio's most colorful fish." I have been named a rainbow darter because of the bright colors seen on the male fish of the species. We usually grow 3 inches and live all over North America and throughout major Ohio rivers. We like to feed on macroinvertebrates, or small water insects. This means that we prefer shallow waters with strong currents, searching for and feeding on these tiny insects. The presence of us in streams and rivers indicates a healthy river, as these species cannot live in polluted, dirty water.



### Turtle

Hey there! You may have seen me around the Great Miami River. I'm a snapping turtle. I get my name because I have a large, powerful jaw that I use for feeding. I really enjoy eating aquatic plants, invertebrates, fish in the river, and sometimes small mammals and birds. They call me Ohio's largest turtle since I can weigh up to 35 pounds. I can grow up to 20 inches, a lot bigger than other turtles in Ohio. Even though I'm pretty large and common throughout Ohio, you may not see me all the time since I don't enjoy basking in the sun. I live in deeper areas of rivers and streams and only like to come to the river surface when I need to breathe.



Animal information was provided to us by the Ohio DNR Wildlife, Ohio DNR Division of. "Species Guide Index." Ohio DNR Division of Wildlife, Ohio.gov, 2012, wildlife. [ohiodnr.gov/species-and-habitats/species-guide-index](http://ohiodnr.gov/species-and-habitats/species-guide-index).



## Write Your Own River Story

For a long time \_\_\_\_\_ had lived along the Great Miami River in a \_\_\_\_\_ cove. In the cove, there were \_\_\_\_\_ everywhere. One day while it was \_\_\_\_\_ around an animal splashed in the water. It exclaimed in surprise! But this was a very unusual animal, for it had \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_. The \_\_\_\_\_ went to investigate. It spoke to the surprise visitor, “Hi I’m an \_\_\_\_\_, what kind of animal are you?” \_\_\_\_\_ responded, “I am \_\_\_\_\_, I live along this river too! What kind of animal are you?” “Well what is your favorite activity to do in the river?” \_\_\_\_\_ asked. “I like to explore and \_\_\_\_\_, what about you?” \_\_\_\_\_ said. “I like to do that too! I like to explore at a close park near my area of the river!” \_\_\_\_\_ exclaimed. “My favorite spot is just downstream! Let’s go explore overthere!” \_\_\_\_\_ suggested.

\_\_\_\_\_

### River Animals Word Bank

Heron (Great Blue Heron)  
Snapping Turtle  
Duck (Mallard Duck)  
Fish (Rainbow Darter)  
Beaver

### Sample Verbs Word Bank

Jumping  
Flying  
Splashing  
Swimming

### Sample Nouns Word Bank

Wings	Scales
Beak	Fur
Tail	Legs
Fins	Shell



**Use these prompts for further discussion and reflection:**

Describe how you feel when you see trash or garbage near the river.

What are some of your favorite water memories?

How does trash affect the environment?

Can you describe your favorite animal in Ohio? Where do they live? What do they eat?

If you could have a whole day on the river, what would you do?

What are some ways you can help our rivers?



**Watershed:** An area of land where all of the water that falls on it drains to or collects into the same place.





## Acknowledgments

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## About The Authors

The River Stewards program is the flagship program of the Rivers Institute housed in the Fitz Center for Leadership in Community at the University of Dayton. The three-year interdisciplinary and experiential learning program focuses on leadership development and civic engagement around our local rivers and watersheds. Based on the model of Learn, Lead, Serve, River Stewards participate in weekly seminars, actively engage in the community through service, and collaborate to develop a cohort project their senior year.

This book is the capstone project of the 2020 Cohort of River Stewards. Utilizing the interdisciplinary skill sets, the cohort worked together to create, illustrate, design, write, communicate, and fund the book. The 2020 Cohort of River Stewards includes Austin Williamson, Baylor Johnson, Carter Spires, Casey Willson, Cassidy Count, Claire Roberts, Jack Hallagan, Katherine Kirchner, Kelly Hines, Meaghan Lightfoot, Natalie Merline, Noël Michel, Rachel Carr, Sammy Miller, Troy Lampenfeld, and Zack Jordan. Special thanks to Noël Michel for the graphic design and Sammy Miller for the illustrations.











